





Minnesota: Land of Sky-Blue Waters

By LAURINDA KEYS LONG

It is fitting in several ways that the source of the Mississippi, flowing 3,765 kilometers through the heart of America, is located in a lake in northern Minnesota. The 12th largest of the 50 American states, Minnesota is in the middle of the American heartland.

The Mississippi River at Bemidji, Minnesota.

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ADAM BIRD © AP/WIDEWORLD

Minnesota Trade Mission

By DEEPANJALI KAKATI

Governor Tim Pawlenty will lead a three-city trade mission to India in October.

A delegation of Minnesota business executives, led by state Governor Tim Pawlenty, will visit New Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai in October to explore investment and trade opportunities.

"Strong economic growth is unleashing a wave of demand in India. From consumer goods to professional services, hi-tech to health care, machinery to processed foods—the prospects are abundant," says Governor Pawlenty. "It's important that we make these connections firsthand."

Among the many reasons for Minnesota to expand trade with India, he says, are the country's fast-growing markets, a middle class population with growing purchasing power and a huge youth consumer base that has an increasing desire for hi-tech products and services.

During the October 20-27 visit, about 30 business leaders will get a chance to promote increased exports to India, gather firsthand market information and contacts, and develop relationships with Indian business organizations like the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). Major participants include technology conglomerates 3M and IBM Corporation, speciality retailer Best Buy Inc., the fluid-handling and components firm Graco Inc. and Datacard Group, which makes ID badges and cards.

On the itinerary are several networking events; presentations on India's IT industry, the energy sector and the health care industry; and discussions and meetings with potential Indian customers and partners. The delegation also plans to visit the Fortis Hospital in New Delhi, the IBM Center and the Wipro campus in

Bangalore, and the offices of the Tata Group in Mumbai.

Minnesota's manufactured exports to India grew 208 percent between 2000 and 2005. Out of the state's total exports of \$15.2 billion in 2006, India received \$129.5 million in goods. It is these figures that the delegation will seek to boost.

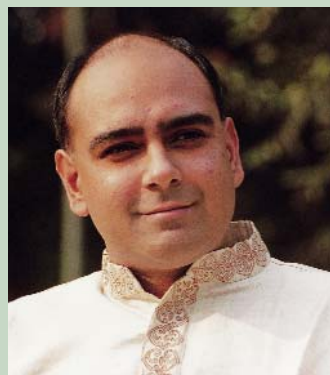
There is also strong potential for Indian investment in Minnesota. In 2005, Indian investors owned assets worth \$1.36 billion in the United States, up from \$277 million in 2002. Indian-owned companies in Minnesota include Suzlon Wind Energy Corporation and Wipro Technologies.

Also part of the visiting group is an 11-member governor's delegation which includes State Senator Satveer Chaudhary, U.S. Congressman Erik Paulsen and Gopal Khanna, Minnesota's chief information officer.

"This is an amazing opportunity, not only for Minnesota businesses to find new markets, but for the people of our state and the people of India to foster a more productive friendship," says Chaudhary, who helped set up the sister-state agreement between Minnesota and Haryana, where his family is from. "People have raised concerns about trade imbalances and things like outsourcing, which are all the more reason for this delegation to kick the doors open for Minnesota businesses to compete in the global marketplace."

Chaudhary adds that India's middle class is larger than the entire U.S. population, which makes those Indian consumers one of the world's largest untapped markets. "By taking this kind of initiative to establish better business relationships, I know Minnesota is going to do well," he says.

State Senator Satveer Chaudhary



HEMANT BHATTNAGAR

Its wheat-covered plains were once known as "the breadbasket of the world." It is home to family-owned farms, small town main streets, middle-class suburbs, world class medical and agricultural research, and boasts one of the highest education levels in the United States.

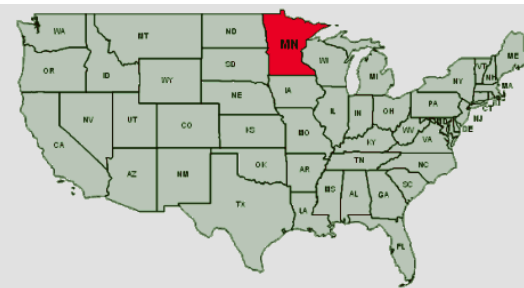
Winters are freezing, with most of the state covered in snow from mid-December to mid-March. Record-breaking blizzards and forest fires are regular occurrences. Relief is provided, however, by the many lakes—about 12,000 of them—and the rushing rivers that enabled Minnesotans to ship all that wheat, and later corn, iron ore and lumber, to the rest of America and the world.

The Dakota Indians who named the region chose aptly. Minnesota means "Land of Sky-Blue Waters." Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem about a heroic Indian, *The Song of Hiawatha*, was inspired by Minnesota's natural beauty. Many places in the state are named in the poem.

Minnesota, and particularly its major metropolitan area, the "Twin Cities" of Minneapolis and St. Paul, will be in the news a year from now. The Republican Party, headed by President George W. Bush, will hold its quadrennial convention to formally select candidates to run for President and Vice President in the November 2008 general elections. The opposition Democratic Party will convene in Denver, Colorado, to choose its

Right above: A scene from St. Paul-based Ali Selim's movie, Sweet Land, about immigrant struggles in the 1920s. Filmed in southwestern Minnesota in 2004, it won "Best First Feature" in the 2007 Spirit Awards for independent productions.

Right: Fishing season opens on Lake Alexander, Minnesota, in May 2004. The morning temperature was below freezing, causing mist.





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India Center at the University of Minnesota

The new India Center at the University of Minnesota, approved by the state government in May 2007, would promote exchanges and collaboration in areas ranging from education to business.

The main goals of the center, which the university planned to open this fall, are to foster understanding of India's history, culture and values; to promote economic, governmental and academic pursuits involving India; and facilitate partnerships in research, education and business.

Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty signed a higher education bill on May 30 that includes a \$150,000 appropriation for the university to create the center at its Minneapolis campus, in the Office of International Programs, which is also home to the China Center and the Learning Abroad Center. The one-time appropriation requires a match from the university and will likely manifest itself in the form of staffing and physical space.

"We live in a global economy. Minnesota can compete and win in the world economy if we have the tools, training and relationships to succeed.



University of Minnesota

India and South Asia are an important and growing partner in our state's economic development. We need this center to better position Minnesota to forge a close economic relationship in the future," said State Representative Erik Paulsen, who introduced the legislation in February.

—D.K.

candidates. The location of the Republican convention is no determiner, however, of how Minnesotans will vote in the election. It is known as a "swing state," meaning the voters' choices are less predictable, they vote in large numbers, and in a tight race their decision could "swing" the election. In general, Minnesotans are known for moderate-to-progressive politics and

The Mall of America, with more than 600 stores, restaurants and entertainment outlets, is still America's largest 15 years after it opened in Bloomington, Minnesota.



JIM MONE © AP/WIDEWORLD

social policies, and a high degree of civic involvement. By several measures, Minnesota has been ranked as among the healthiest and most livable states, with a well educated population.

The convention delegates, and other visitors to the Twin Cities, can find plenty of bests and firsts and *biggests*. The Mayo Clinic is a destination for world leaders seeking treatment or just a check-up. Northwest Airlines has its headquarters in the metropolitan area. So does 3M company, where Scotch tape was invented. From the cities' docks, one can take a paddleboat ride down the historic and mighty Mississippi, the nation's second longest, but probably most sung about, river. Or go shopping in America's biggest mall, at 882,550 square meters.

"Even if you loathe shopping, you should see the Mall of America," writes Syd Kearney, travel writer for the *Houston Chronicle* in that other celebration of bigness, Texas. "It is a microcosm of what is best and worst about the United States, our obscene consumption, our brass, our epic vision, our attention deficit, our quest for the good life and our need to socialize."

The two cities, with their separate mayors and city councils, are working together to stage the political convention. But it was not always so. Starting out as a log church (St. Paul) and a British fort (Minneapolis) in the 1700s, the rival towns competed for the right to host the

state capital (St. Paul won), slandered each other in their newspapers and inflated their population figures so much that both were investigated by the U.S. Census Bureau.

From 1860 to 1880, however, there was little need to falsify such numbers. Minnesota was one of the Midwestern destinations for millions of Northern Europeans who flocked to America seeking a chance to build a better life. So many Swedes and Norwegians found Minnesota, with its chilly climate, a comfortable place to settle that they gave the state a distinctive Nordic flavor. Hard work, hardiness, flower-painted furniture, folk dances, an exceptional focus on children and their education are some examples of the Nordic heritage. Another is a belief by many that the Vikings, ancestors of the 19th century immigrants, found America before Christopher Columbus and that they sailed right along those rivers and lakes to western Minnesota. The state's professional football team reflects that heritage in its name, the Vikings, and in the horned helmets and long blond hair that some fans wear at the games.

The tradition of welcoming immigrants continues and Minnesota has a more diverse population than one would imagine, including more than 30,000 Asian Indians. They are the state's second-largest Asian population behind the Hmong refugees from Laos, and their number is growing much faster. The

Associated Press reports. It quotes University of Minnesota economist V.V. Chari as saying the Asian Indian growth comes from the attractions of the region's high-tech industry and major retail companies such as Best Buy and Target, which have big operations in the Twin Cities area. Minnesota is not densely populated. Just over 5 million people share its 225,365 square kilometers, with nearly 60 percent of them living in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area.

The Mississippi River is a major influence on Minnesotans, flowing down from its source at Lake Itasca. Charles Lindbergh, the first person to fly solo, non-stop, across the Atlantic Ocean, and one of Minnesota's many famous natives, entwined the river with the strands of his first memory of an airplane. "I can even connect the Mississippi, here, with aviation," the by-then elderly Lindbergh said in 1973, in a speech on the steps of his



TED S. WARREN © AP/WIDEWORLD

childhood home in Little Falls, Minnesota. "One day, before the first World War began, when I was upstairs playing in our house, I heard an unusually loud engine noise. I ran to the window and

A Minnesota Vikings fan cheers the state's football team.

climbed out onto the roof. There was an airplane flying upriver, below the treetops

Famous Minnesotans



"It's a swell state, Minnesota. ... We lived in a white house with a garden. Grand Rapids is surrounded by lakes. It's a beautiful, beautiful town."

—Actress/singer
Judy Garland



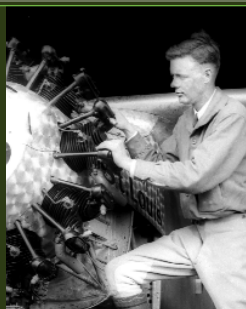
"In the fall when the days became crisp and gray, and the long Minnesota winter shut down like the white lid of a box... It was dreary, too, that on the tees where the gay colors fluttered in summer there were now only the desolate sand-boxes knee-deep in crusted ice. ..."

—Novelist/Playwright
F. Scott Fitzgerald, in
"Winter Dreams"



"It had never occurred to me that one might without indecency write of the people of Sauk Centre, Minnesota, as one felt about them. Our fictional tradition, you see, was that all of us in Midwestern villages were altogether noble and happy; that not one of us would exchange the neighborly bliss of living on Main Street for the heathen gaudiness of New York or Paris or Stockholm. ..."

—Nobel Literature
Prize winner
Sinclair Lewis



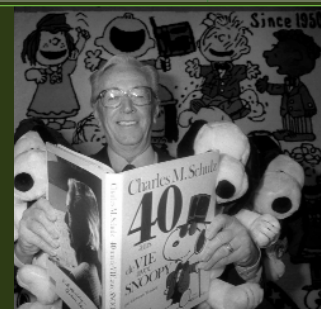
"I can even connect the Mississippi, here, with aviation. One day, before the first World War began, when I was upstairs playing in our house, I heard an unusually loud engine noise. I ran to the window and climbed out onto the roof. There was an airplane flying upriver, below the treetops on the banks. ... Of course I wanted to fly in it..."

—Aviation pioneer
Charles Lindbergh



"My country is the Minnesota-North Dakota territory. That's where I was born and learned how to walk and it's where I was raised and went to school. ... My youth was spent wildly among the snowy hills and sky-blue lakes, willow fields and abandoned open pit mines."

—Folk
singer/songwriter
Bob Dylan



"It would be great to be able to go into the house where my mother was in the kitchen and my comic books were in the other room, and I could lie down on the couch and read the comics and then have dinner with my parents."

—Cartoonist
Charles Schulz

on the banks. ...Of course I wanted to fly in it, but my mother said that it would be much too expensive and dangerous."

Folk singer Bob Dylan is another whose early life was influenced by Minnesota's "Big Outdoors." "My youth was spent wildly among the snowy hills and sky-blue lakes, willow fields and abandoned open pit mines," Dylan wrote in a 1963 letter. "Contrary to rumors, I am very proud of where I'm from and also of the many bloodstreams that run in my roots." Dylan, born in Duluth, is also one of the Minnesotans who believes the Vikings were the first to reach America. In his memoirs, he relates the advice he gave to Irish rock singer Bono, of the band U2: "I told him that if he wants to see the birthplace of America, he should go to Alexandria, Minnesota, where the Vikings came and settled in the 1300s."

Just as Longfellow's *Hiawatha* can be traced in the mountains, lakes and rivers of Minnesota, fans of Dylan can find references in the state's manmade landmarks—factories, towns and working-class cafes—that resonate in the modern poet's songs. Dylan, who grew up in the mining range town of Hibbing, about 240 kilometers north of Alexandria, mapped out a road trip for his friend, Bono. A traveler following the route can't help humming familiar refrains when passing towns with names such as Rollingstone. The road Dylan selected for Bono is Highway 61, the theme of his 1965 song, and runs along the

Minnesotans play hockey on the frozen surface of Lake Superior. On February 19, 2007, the ice was about 14.5 centimeters thick near the shore, by the Lester River.



NATHAN HOWARD © AP/WIDEWORLD

great, blue Mississippi River.

"As a child growing up in Minnesota, older kids in my primary school used to tease us younger students and would only allow us into their club if we could spell the word Mississippi," says Daniel Miller, a project development officer with the U.S. Agency for International Development at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi. "For a kid in the first or second grade, that was a long word to spell, but living in Minnesota we were familiar with the word and quickly learned how to spell it correctly. It became a game to see how fast you could do it."

Another memory for Miller is eating SPAM. No, it's not junk e-mail. And it's not the name of this magazine, either. Before the Internet arrived, to Americans, SPAM meant just one thing, processed, pre-cooked, spiced ham in a can. "Hormel invented SPAM in 1937 in Austin, Minnesota, where I grew up," says Miller. "Our high school sports team was named the Packers in recognition of the important role that the Hormel meat packing plant played in the local economy. Although some of my friends laugh when I tell them I still have SPAM with eggs for

breakfast, I am proud of the fact that SPAM made my hometown famous."

Norman Borlaug is another famous product of Minnesota, even though he wasn't born there. Borlaug's work to develop hardier, healthier and more easily grown crops earned him the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize and the honor, in India, of being known as the father of the Green Revolution. He earned his Bachelor's, Master's and PhD degrees at the University of Minnesota, where agriculture and weather remain important research fields.

An old joke refers to a man who moved to the northern part of the state and asked a neighbor what Minnesota was like in the summer. "I don't know," he replied. "I've only lived here 13 months." But ask a Minnesotan what to do about the winter, and the answer will probably be: Go cross-country skiing, ice-skating, ice-fishing, and of course, play ice hockey. America's gold medal-winning Olympic hockey team, which beat the Soviet Union in a breathtaking match in Lake Placid, New York, in 1980, was coached by a Minnesotan, Herb Brooks, and half of the amateur players were from the state.

There is one more thing to do about the cold: stay in Minneapolis. The city's skyway system connects 52 blocks, making it possible to live, eat, work, shop, be entertained and travel between all these locations without ever going outside.

But that would be a shame in the land of sky-blue waters.



Daniel Miller, who contributed to this article, is a native Minnesotan.

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